THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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ike sound business firms which ish annual condensed state- ts of assets and liabilities, with recast of future developments favorable and unfavorable, we ge teachers of English should into the record closely this . The times invite soul-search- The first casualty of war is h, and the second is the hu- ities: books are burned, li- ies are crumbled, statues are erized, and professors are cash- d.

he strain of emergency opera- falls less heavily upon us than teachers of chemistry, phys- and mechanic arts. Yet, be- e our enterprise is essential in preservation of the American of freedom, our position in total national effort and our hodology bear looking into. ing space for a consideration ll questions, I mention a few ght by recent events to a posi- of major importance.

ur greatest asset, as it is also greatest liability, is our pre- d status in the curriculum. No r subject is usually required very college student. Many hers consider this requirement unalterable condition in colle- e education, yet teachers of the ics had the same idea forty s ago.

here is food for thought in the ement of a Latin teacher in *ol and Society*, August 2, 1941: m a freetrader in educational ers. I do not ask for a subsidy rotective tariff for my subject. the other hand, I do not wish e other subjects subsidized or ected. 'Let every tub stand on wn bottom,' is my slogan. Let strations in Latin increase or ease as the subject proves its ational value to pupils, par- , and the general public. Also egistrations in English, science, he social studies increase or ease as they prove their edu- nal value." The attack on the iel now comes also from our er allies. What positive meas- are we taking to retain a ble position?

subsections indicate anything all, they reflect the fact that, eneral, college is no longer an itution for the intellectually . College is today a training nd for social action. To some g people a college diploma is meant to be an entrance into a ned profession, and, conditions g favorable, they hope never in to read a book or enter a ary. They claim that this ambi- has been fostered in part by r experience in English classes. tudy of the reading habits of ge graduates demonstrates that

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The College English Association: A Statement of Purpose

The College English Association arose in 1938 to supply a need which had long been felt by teachers of English in undergraduate colleges. This need was that of an association which would provide, as no existing organization did provide, opportunity for free and informal discussion of their particular problems.

By its historical development, and especially by its statement of purpose in 1927, the Modern Language Association is committed to the consideration of problems of research in the fields of the modern languages. In becoming an organization which devoted itself entirely to problems of research, the Modern Language Association has drawn away, quite legitimately and under admirable compulsion, from the conceptions of its founders. Indeed, the College English Association was founded in 1938 to recapture many of the original intentions of the Modern Language Association.

The National Council of Teachers of English, it is true, had in the meantime sprung up to meet the need for an association of teachers of English. This organization, moreover, has a section for college teachers, and recognizes problems of the college teacher in its *Journal;* but the Council is so large, its meetings, even the regional ones, so crowded, and the proportion of college teachers to the whole number so small, that it fails to provide the free discussion which many college teachers would like.

The College English Association was formed in 1938, therefore, to provide a more closely knit organization for dealing with the common problems of the teacher of English in the colleges, and to emphasize the work neither of the graduate schools nor of the secondary schools, but rather undergraduate work in English literature, language, and composition. Since the College English Association was organized, the National Council of Teachers of English has been considerably more active in recognizing the interests of the college teacher, both in its meetings and in its *Journal.*

Though no formal affiliation of the College English Association with the Modern Language Association has taken place, the annual meetings of the two associations have thus far been held in conjunction. The Modern Language Association will, it is hoped, come to recognize our group of teachers of English as it has recognized the groups of teachers of foreign languages. But until one or both of these older organizations shall provide as satisfactorily for the teacher of English in the colleges as for the other groups, the College English Association will continue its independent existence.

The College English Association offers opportunities, through national and regional meetings, and through its NEWS LETTER, for discussion of matters pertaining to literary scholarship and teaching. Its subjects for discussion have ranged from such specific and practical matters as the content and ordering of an English major, the problems and techniques of special kinds of courses (survey, period, type), college work in composition, in the history of the language, to larger and more fundamental considerations, such as the desirable contents of the English curriculum, theories of criticism, and even the general philosophy of English studies.

Through such discussions and the associations afforded by informal meetings, the College English Association aims to keep the college teacher of English alive to the range, the implications, and the possibilities of his subject.

Elizabeth Manwaring
Howard F. Lowry
William C. De Vane, Chairman

More Details of Annual Meeting; Indianapolis, December 28-29

Latest bulletins from the Program Committee and the Local Committee in charge of the CEA Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, December 28-29, add some details to what was published in the October NEWS LETTER.

George F. Reynolds, University of Colorado, has been announced as the speaker at the first session, to be held at 4:00 P. M. in the Palm Room of the Claypool Hotel, conference headquarters, on Sunday, December 28. His subject will be: "Democratic Ideals as Presented in the Great Writers of the Past."

After the business meeting at 5:30 P. M. and a sufficient period for relaxation, the annual dinner will begin, presumably at 7:00 P. M. sharp, in the Chateau Room of the Claypool. At the dinner, selections from James Whitcomb Riley, the Hoosier Poet, will be read by George E. Davis, Purdue University, to be followed by the presidential address by Norman E. Foerster. President Foerster's topic has not been announced, but it will relate to the conference theme: "What Can Teachers of English

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What About the Freshman Research Paper?

The very presence of the research paper in the composition course is, as academic things go, rather new, and its position and purpose still need clarification. It is even possible to question its having any place at all in our work. But it makes little freshman hands and minds go through the motions of grown-up research, and in many cases it gives non-literary students a strenuous but welcome holiday from a conservative book of readings.

Just how valuable are the motions of research to a student who has only begun to realize what the academic pursuit of truth means? And just how wise is it to let a student who has read so little great literature as the average freshman of today devote a month or more of the time he should spend on "English" to reading in quantity material of dubious merit?

Because the research paper is often on a non-literary subject, a serious charge can be brought against it. It does not sufficiently contribute to—and even interferes with—the primary obligations of an English department to its underclass students—sound training in the use of language and significant contact with great literature. Better teach freshmen to write good sentences and to read good books! Research is the business of the graduate school, or at the earliest, upperclass major courses! we are tempted to say.

I should nevertheless be reluctant to eliminate the research paper from the freshman course. Flesh-wearying ritual of the Teutonic cult though it may be, it is not devoid of glitter and its own special joy. Greatest benefit to the student comes from its impact as a total experience. From many a freshman it requires the longest sustained intellectual effort he has ever made, and only the most hardened sinners fail to confess pride at the completion of their masterpieces. Even the most exclusively literary instructor experiences a moment of happy wonder at the genuine enthusiasms that students develop over subjects like "The Domestic Life of the Sioux Indians," "The Garden Club Movement in America," or "Plastic Surgery Since the World War."

Whatever may be said against the research paper, students generally *do* like it, and for no trivial reasons. They admit with pleasure their discoveries that libraries are the brain-centers of society, that knowledge can be usefully ordered, and that tedious labor can lead to something like joy. Properly directed, a student often learns what

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Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Non-Members and Libraries, $1.50.

The Greeks Had a Word for It

Far back in the preceding century, when we were very young, two books in our father's pastoral library led active lives, and undoubtedly helped greatly in the construction of sermons. They were entitled *Study of Words* and *Words and Their Uses*. Every book in that library endured our youthful scrutiny, including these. Thus early began our study of Semantics. Later on we discovered that an ancient Greek philosopher had devoted a dialogue to the same subject, though he had some other word for it.

It is no new thing for English teachers to insist that the exact meaning of a word shall be known to its user; perhaps, however, they have not always realized the enormous social destruction that may result from loose definitions. Many wars might have been avoided if all mankind spoke one language, and democracy might be further forward if we all said what we meant, and everyone who heard us understood what we had said.

These are important matters, but it is easy for English teachers to forget their importance. So if a new word, and an almost hysterical vogue for it, arouse renewed interest in long-recognized truths, then God bless Semantics!

Postscript: The author of one of those books in that nineteenth-century parsonage library was an English churchman of the old school. The American civil war was raging when he wrote; and perhaps we ought not to smile at his assertion that any nation which could so far forget the dignity and traditions of the English language as to spell *labour* and *neighbour* without the "u" might well be destroyed by internal strife. That is going Semantics one better.

Not Only Write But Print

Recent contributions to THE NEWS LETTER imply, if they do not directly charge, that the teacher of composition is at least partially unfitted for his job if he does not write.

What is meant by writing is left somewhat vague, but a defense of the "non-writing" teacher that appeared in the October issue limited the argument to what seems to be free-lance writing. The teacher, we were told, does not have time for the strenuous competition.

To this we can agree, for contribution to general magazines, if it is to be regular and sustained, requires ordinarily for feature articles a kind of reporting and collection of fact that the composition teacher cannot accomplish for lack of time. Were he seriously to attempt it, his efforts would be hopelessly dated because of interruptions. The usual six-week lag necessary in publication simply will not permit casual preparation of timely articles.

For fiction a somewhat similar situation exists. Modern fiction has a plentiful share of reporting, and it is doubtful whether reporting the academic scene will provide more than a few even part-time careers.

Besides there is the fairly important consideration that magazine fiction for the most part affords examples of what our students should be taught *not* to write and *not* to appreciate. The clichés of expression, motivation, and construction are hardly what we are after.

Nevertheless, too many of our composition teachers do not write for print at all, whatever the medium of publication. And if they did, it is a safe bet that they would learn something of practical value to transmit to their students.

They might learn that a degree of breeziness, though it must have a certain virtuosity, has value in any publication save a doctoral dissertation or a medical journal (see the *Atlantic* and *Harper's*); that paragraphs can be too long, especially in columns of twelve picas (see THE NEWS LETTER); that commas are used with decreasing ardor these days (see any magazine and most books); that varieties of type faces and other typographical aids as well as masses of words provide emphasis and coherence (see almost any editorial column); that deadlines pass and forms close while that inevitable word is being sought for.

And they might learn, too, that white space for their printed remarks is vastly more expensive than typewriter paper and must be put to the most efficient use, that conciseness comes near the top in a list of the writer's practical virtues.

It is not necessary to wait for an advanced course before revealing to the composition student that if he writes in later life, knowledge of some of these matters will be of value. Certainly it will be of more practical worth, even to the freshman, than knowledge of the elaborate Macaulayan paragraph, the Ciceronian period, the Ruskinian purple patch, or the Paterian parenthesis.

Literature and the Other Arts

An interest in the relations between literature and the other arts is of long standing. In recent years the study has been given impetus in a number of ways. Several special lectureships, for example, have been devoted to the topic, notably Professor Chew's Tudor and Stuart Club Lecture at Johns Hopkins in 1939, and Professor Panofsky's Mary Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr in the same year. These latter lectures were repeated at Princeton University. The Ryerson Lectures at Yale are to deal next year with a similar subject.

One of the recent meetings of the College Art Association, presided over by Professor Ronald Crane, was concentrated upon the Principles of Criticism, and the fall meeting of the English Institute in New York City will give part of its program to the Relation of the Arts.

Notwithstanding these and many other evidences of activity in this field, no attempt so far has been made to secure any general cooperation among the various workers. In spite of the possible danger of a mechanized scholarship, no one can doubt the advantages of combined effort, the desirability of fellowship among students of kindred subjects, or the value of establishing something like a clearing house for ideas.

It is especially important that emphasis should be placed upon literature as an art. Much of our study has been historical in a narrow sense, perhaps too exclusively so. Science tends to take rather more than its share of our interests. But it is a fact that at least some of those who study the relations of science and literature are among the first also who have connected literature with the other arts. The Modern Language Association has done well to establish a group on Literature and Science; it has also done well to give favorable attention to the interest already expressed by a large number of its members in the formation of a new group on Literature and the Arts of Design. This group has now been organized and officially recognized (as General Topics IX) by the Association.

It may be properly asked what the Arts of Design are assumed to be. They are, if music is excluded for merely practical reasons, painting, engraving, sculpture, architecture (at least in certain aspects), and the useful arts, such as weaving and metal work. Anything, therefore, from a statue by Michelangelo, or a painting by Titian, to a printer's ornament, or a filigree basket, would seem to fall within the boundaries.

The Program Committee of the Modern Language Association expects the new group to show that its members have a serious purpose and definite plans for study. Our program will obviously depend upon the persons who elect to support the group and upon their expression of their interest. We must take counsel regarding the most profitable areas of investigation and the most effective means of cultivating the studies that we propose to undertake.

Among the many fields of study, a fruitful one is that of the illustrated book in all its variations. Illuminated manuscripts, books illustrated by their authors, such as Blake's and Morris's, books which make deliberate use of the combination of verse and picture, as the emblem books do—all of these are obvious. Some study of ornamental capitals in printed books is now going on.

Many students of the Renaissance are greatly interested in the emblems and *imprese* which influenced many of the writers of the period, including Rabelais, Bojardo, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. In fact a project dealing with the mottoes of *imprese* and having as one of its purposes the identification of portraits has been suggested for the consideration of the group.

The illustration and elucidation of poetry by paintings, tapestries, and other works of art is likely to be important in the activity of the group. Such a study touches the teaching of literature closely. For example the latter part of Dante's *Inferno* grows in intelligibility for a student who has seen the mosaics in the Baptistery at Florence (or their reproductions), and Spenser's presentation of the Seven Sins in the *Faerie Queene* is clearer to one who becomes acquainted with contemporary pictorial versions of this theme, such as the Hampton Court tapestries.

But rendering literature more intelligible to both teacher and student, though valuable enough to justify the work of the group, cannot be the final objective. Questions in criticism at once arise. Can one learn the characteristics of an age better by considering several of its arts rather than one? Do the words *baroque, neo-classical, romantic,* mean the same thing when applied to painting and poetry?

Further, are the fundamental principles of all the arts the same, or must the critic learn a separate technique for each? Where do the theoretical differences between them begin? Is Croce right or wrong in asserting that the same æsthetic conceptions apply to all the arts?

But all questions must get their answer from the membership. The important thing is that those who are interested express their views and indicate what they are willing to do to carry them out. For example certain members have already suggested the compiling of a bibliography as a first step. Others have indicated their interest in subjects that might make papers for the program in December. More offers of papers will be welcomed. The officers are eager to receive suggestions of all sorts, both for immediate activity and for future development.

Members are urged to bring this to the attention of others and to send to the officers the names of persons likely to be interested.

Allan H. Gilbert, Chairman
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Here Is a Device That Has Worked

(Members are invited to contribute brief descriptions of classroom devices which have proved both practicable and productive.)

Some English teachers persistently look down their noses at "mere journalism." Nevertheless, many of the devices of journalistic writing find their way into the conventional composition course, and sometimes when a student has employed them, the result is such effective composition that the teacher feels uneasy about his pupil's honesty.

One device of the journalist, however, seems not to have been discovered by the composition teacher. This is the "six honest serving men," whom Kipling put into a not too polished but much quoted piece of verse:

I keep six honest serving men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Anyone who has to do with reporting is familiar with this rhyme. He knows that the customary news-story lead answers these interrogatives if it is possible to do so, and that more elaborate answers make up the body of the story.

One cannot speak for all the 2000 or more teachers of college composition in the United States, but acquaintance with a considerable number of them and with at least a portion of the textbooks that they write or use fails to reveal that they employ this device. Even the textbooks on feature writing and editorial writing seem to ignore it except when some reference is made to the conventional summary lead. And if they ignore it, it is hardly surprising that the "composition" teacher should also, for he, perhaps, has never heard of it, or, having heard of it, he dismisses it with a faint disdain as merely a tool used in an inferior sort of writing.

And yet, it may be asked—of teachers of editorial and feature writing as well as of composition teachers—what does any effort at exposition or argument attempt but to answer these six questions, which with a seventh, "which," complete the list of the interrogatives in our language?

What, for instance, did the President say in his radio address? *When* did he say it and *where? Why* did he say it and *Who* is going to carry out his proposal? *How* will it be carried out? *Which* of two alternatives did he favor?

All of these, of course, could be answered in summary fashion in a report of what took place yesterday or to-day. But what of some other questions that might occur to the intelligent and critical (friendly or unfriendly) hearer of the President's speech?

What, for instance, were the especially significant parts? *What* did he fail to say? *What* will be the consequences? *How* is the plan likely to affect various groups of people? *Why* was not some other person or agency chosen to carry it out? *When* might it be better to put it into effect? And so on. A hundred similar questions, pertinent or not, depending on what the President said and the circumstances, will suggest themselves to whoever is accustomed to discussion, explanation, and argument.

It may seem that in this adaptation of Kipling's honest serving men to other forms than news writing the reporters' simple questions have been elaborated beyond recognition. Yet are they different from what the body of the longer newspaper account contains in its attempt to satisfy the reader's curiosity?

Actually this device is by no means the private property of reporters. It is fundamental to all composition—even narration and description, but especially exposition and argumentation—because interrogatives are what the person uses who wishes to be informed or is willing to be convinced.

C. D.

New York Group Meets

The annual Conference of College English Teachers of Up-State New York was held at the Linklaen House, Cazenovia, on Saturday, October 18. The afternoon was given over to fellowship and a leisurely and friendly exchange of ideas, stimulated mostly by tea and cigarettes. Members from no less than thirteen colleges gradually assembled, so that sixty-three sat down together to dinner.

Perhaps a dozen more came in for the evening meeting, at which Professor Burges Johnson read a paper on "Techniques of Accomplishment." The general discussion that followed unfortunately tended to wander off into details of composition, missing therefore some of the wider implications of his provocative subject.

These meetings are still in the experimental state. The Chairman realizes this keenly, and he has already sent to all who attended letters inviting criticisms and suggestions which may be considered by a representative committee for the benefit of next year's program.

Horace A. Eaton, Chairman
Syracuse University

Unpublished Letters

(Members who have used The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens *in the classroom, or who are using it, may be especially interested in these two letters, one of them hitherto unpublished, and the other published only in part, in the Carnegie Research pamphlet entitled "Good Writing.")*

Carmel, California
March 8, 1932

Dear Burges Johnson:

This is a big order that you hand me in the mail this foggy morning. What makes you think that I can answer all these questions? I can't: they are not in my line. It's a long time since I have thought much about style, and the criteria of good writing, and teaching the young to say it. One or two tips I may offer you, however.

The French are all taught to write a polite letter, as you know. I don't know how, but from the good, polite notes I have received from them I have guessed that the schools taught the pupils clichés, the regular forms for saying all the pleasant nothings. But that is not writing as you mean it and as the French writers write. I have sometimes thought, however, that the cliché was the basis from which all the French start, learning consciously to play away from the fixed, known phrase. Thence comes their literature, but for business uses it might be best to teach the very phrase with which to say the few things that businessmen have to say. Just as the newspapers teach etiquette.

As a city editor I used to tempt reporters, when there was time, to tell me verbally the story they were going to write. I tried to get them excited or interested enough to search their minds for the exact, warm words to express themselves and then say: "Good. Now write it that way." My theory is that fellows who can talk at all find not only the phrases but their own personal style in talking and that the great struggle of a writer is to learn to write as he would talk. But this means also that students are to learn to talk, consciously, well. I have a little son, aged seven, who has not yet learned to write, but I have taught him as a game, as play, to seek and use the pat word or phrase, and he has indeed learned to delight in patness, so to say. He likes words, which is the sound beginning for the development of his own vocabulary; and, by the way, that is what an adequate vocabulary is: my own. But some day I shall read the dictionary to him, making it a search for bully words to remember and learn to use as well as to see things and look for phrases with which to indicate them. It should be fun, I think. In and just before Shakespeare's day, everybody was playing with words, you remember. At Berkeley in my time a lot of students made a game of words; it was almost a fashion, just as thinking was in Oxford and Cambridge during the so-called Oxford Movement. (A study of that phenomenon would pay any educator well; it got thinking and curiosity out upon the campus.) Have you ever thought of applying what you know about politics to a scheme to use fashion, student fashion, I mean, to start and get what you want from students. I'll bet it can be done. Lippman and I put it over on Harvard once, as I tell in my Autobiography. You could put words into the mouths of students as sure as they have put dirty, yellow corduroy pants on their legs at Stanford—by some shrewd politics, and it is easier to steer than to create.

I know I have not answered your questions, but you did not expect me to. I have done just about what you thought I would. What that is I may tell you some day; and laugh when you recognize it.

Yours in my fashion,
(Signed) Lincoln Steffens
March 23, 1933

Dear Burges:

You say I never wrote you about "Good Writing." I thought I did. I read it with keen interest, and it seems to me I reported that I liked it and believed it would help. Maybe I only composed a letter in my mind; I catch myself at that trick now and then. But I can't remember any constructive criticism of mine and I can't reread the book. I'm getting away on a lecture trip through the Northwest colleges and schools.

If I had your daughter's name, address and airline I might fly with her to Seattle. You might teach your classes in writing never to omit such data from a note of introduction, especially to a married daughter who has probably changed her name.

Did you ever try having a young (or an old) writer tell an incident, with a stenographer out of sight to take it down, then have the writer *write* it? The spoken story is often a model for the written story and shows the writer his native style.

Thanks for what you say about my book. My publisher and my fan mail confirm your judgment; that book is selling right along, even in these times, and it is being read. Students—even—get something out of it. Hence my lecturing.

Yours as always,
Steff

Among other things, they still call me by my [old] name.

Details of Annual Meeting

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Do to Help Preserve the Democratic Tradition in America?" Burges Johnson, Executive Secretary of CEA *pro tem.* will preside.

The program for Monday, December 29, includes a paper by Clarence R. Decker, University of Kansas City, on "The Influence of Democracy on Literary Standards," and one by William Blackburn, Duke University, on "The Values of Literature in the Present Crisis." These will be presented at meetings held in the Palm Room of the Claypool at 10:00 A. M. and 11:00 A. M., respectively. Discussion will follow the reading of papers at these meetings and also the meeting on Sunday afternoon.

Any teacher of undergraduate English courses not a member of CEA is cordially invited to attend the meetings and the dinner.

The Local Committee especially urges that members planning to attend the conference make hotel reservations in advance. Room rates at the Claypool are: Single—$2.50; double bed for two persons—$3.50; twin beds for two persons—$4.50.

The Local Committee also reports that the boards of one "legitimate" theatre in Indianapolis will be trod by actors in the flesh during the week of December 25-31. Those who wish to see Clarence Day's delightful document of life in New York during the irascible but inhibited Eighties may send mail orders for tickets direct to English's Theater. Prices are: $1.10, $1.65, $2.20, and $2.75, including tax.

On the afternoons of Monday and Tuesday from 3:00-6:00 P. M. the Louis XIV Room in the Claypool Hotel will be reserved as a reception room and lounge for CEA members, who are cordially invited to make use of it as a meeting place with opportunity for informal conversation after the strain of pedagogical oratory. Tables for letter writing will be provided.

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most of them never see the *Atlantic, Yale Review,* or *Harper's,* that they never again traffic in ideas outside their immediate business and social circles, and that their thinking consists largely in a reshuffling of their projudices. Westbrook Pegler lays the blame for this condition in part on the colleges; he says: "What goes for thinking in the colleges is largely worrying."

Is not a consideration of the technique of reading and of comprehending the written word indicated? Have we not assumed that reading is as natural as speaking, and that students should understand anything put before them? "Stretch your brains on this," one professor tells his students.

The radio has altered the patterns of learning for all students, and the talkies have had an even greater effect. Oscar Levant, on Information Please, answers detailed literary questions about books he confesses not to have read; he is a movie fan who has absorbed the contents of hundreds of books in their movie versions. Recent investigations show that students learn faster from hearing than from silent reading. "I never understood that poem until I heard you read it," is a common remark in every literature classroom.

Disturbing evidence appears in "The Yale-Harvard Freshmen [sic] Speed-Reading Experiment," which, as reported in *School and Society,* August 16, 1941, discovered "extreme individual differences" in reading ability. The test revealed that many college students are able to read three times as fast as other college students, and also that instruction increased students' speed in reading and their reading comprehension.

To a consideration of reading technique must we not add a consideration of the matters to be read? Have we assumed that the royal road to intelligent reading is through literary masterpieces and through the comprehension of literary materials? Do we stress too much the value of a knowledge of classical mythology and literary history?

Our students bring with them almost no knowledge of the Bible, of classical lore, or of literary history. Shamelessly they ask what is Jove and why is a hamadryad. They have their own mythology, gleaned from the movies, radio, funnies, and the realm of sport. It is difficult for them to see why the affair with Leda is culturally illuminating and why the latest Hollywood gossip is beneath contempt, why Phidippides deserves more attention than the home-team fullback who ran seventy yards for a victory over a traditional rival, or why the domestic troubles of Socrates or Dickens are any more worthy of discussion than those of Molly and Fibber McGee.

Must we not differentiate between the teaching of the technique of reading and the teaching of literature? Can the teaching of the two be done simultaneously? Should there be a preparatory course antecedent to the required historical survey?

At one time the English program was substantially the same throughout the United States. But now wholesome experimentation, especially in fitting course substance to student interests, has so varied content as to make transfer of credit from one institution to another an act of faith. Once we boasted of abetting national cultural unity through a reading of literary masterpieces in historical sequence. Now we find history tedious and social problems exciting. Standard selections from the masters have been replaced by contemporary materials, and there has been no unity of approach in determining these.

In required courses, where the student is at the mercy of a teacher under a system of authoritarian tutelage (Walt Whitman's phrase), should the student not be taught American principles from an American democratic point of view? Do not the ipse dixits, idiosyncrasies, and personal literary and grammatical rules of many teachers brand them as haphazard authoritarians? Must we not direct authoritarianism away from pedantry to the larger goal of helping the individual student to function effectively in advancing personal and national welfare?

There are those who counsel neutrality. Ralph Barton Perry says wisely in . . . *Shall Not Perish from the Earth:* "A nation cannot be strong without some uniform creed diffused among its members. The fact that the democratic creed promotes freedom and tolerates diversity does not make it any less a creed; nor is it any less important that a creed of freedom and diversity should create a bond of like-mindedness among its adherents."

A dislocation in our schools has been caused by the emergency call for the enlargement of our military forces and for office and factory and laboratory workers. Atlanta and Denver report area-wide shortages of teachers. Yet some college enrollments are to be about fifteen per cent higher this year. We who serve the nation in the classroom and laboratory and library must focus our attention realistically on the problems before us. Our future cannot be bright if we echo ancient words about the disinterested pursuit of culture or if we hope by incantation to stop the stukas of alien ideology.

Harry R. Warfel,
University of Maryland

What About the Freshman Research Paper?

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is meant by a labor of love, and sometimes even what is meant by the love of labor—however amateurish this first bit of research may be.

The problem of neatly fitting the research paper into the composition course is really the problem of fitting the composition course into the college curriculum. Despite tacit recognition that the composition course has significant usefulness for a student's whole college career, it is often organized primarily as a preparation for further work in English. It is regarded as inviolable territory of the department.

Yet if properly taught, the nonliterary research paper can do much to break down this departmental barrier. Both the selection of the subject and the final evaluation of the student's work should involve coöperation between the composition instructor and some member of the department in whose field the subject lies. Wherever possible, the paper should be accepted by the department concerned as fulfilling a paper-requirement, and the student should have access, within reason, to the best guidance available, whether formally enrolled in that department or not.

These are, I own, outrageous proposals. They imply that English professors should confer with mere botanists or archæologists about the scheduling and format of term papers. They imply that professors of all sorts must read additional manuscripts and answer the questions of students whom traditionally they would not have to trouble themselves with. They imply the abolition of certain kinds of departmental aloofness, and suggest the duty of a planned correlation. One can hear the cry, Why, the machinery for such interdepartmental correlation doesn't exist! Yet a student will be better taught, better checked upon, in his research project if he has the democratic coöperation of two scholars, and if he does not have to take only his English instructor's word about zoölogy or labor relations. The possible benefits seem well worth the trouble of a little special organizing.

The research paper either assumes maturity in the student or hastens its acquisition. If it smacks too much of the graduate school, it is on the other hand a wholesome corrective for the softening of standards that has infected college teaching. And fewer poorly prepared students succumb to its rigors than to such other remedies as overexposure to great essayists. We ought to realize, however, that we can use the project most effectively only if we are willing to undertake at last the sound intellectual coöperation we should have had all along. Perhaps the research paper, for all the headaches it gives us, will open the way to a newer and better pedagogy.

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